



## 12 Air Force

### Fact Sheet

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The origins of Twelfth Air Force can be traced back to a series of meetings conducted in mid-1942 when Allied planners were developing a strategy for the invasion of North Africa, to be called "Operation TORCH". Because this extensive operation would require a new organization to provide enough manpower and equipment, plans for the activation of Twelfth Air Force were prepared simultaneously with the invasion strategy.

On Aug. 20, 1942, Twelfth Air Force activated at Bolling Field. On Sept. 23, 1942, General Jimmy Doolittle formally assumed command of Twelfth Air Force with Colonel Hoyt S. Vandenberg as chief of staff. Barely four months after it was conceived, Twelfth Air Force made its first contributions to World War II. When D-Day arrived for the invasion of North Africa on Nov. 8, 1942, Twelfth Air Force was ready to meet its assigned missions.

Later, Twelfth Air Force saw action in Sicily, Italy, and Southern France. By VE-Day, Twelfth Air Force had flown 430,681 sorties, dropped 217,156 tons of bombs, claimed destruction of 2,857 enemy aircraft, and lost 2,667 of its own aircraft.

When hostilities ended, Twelfth Air Force was inactivated at Florence, Italy, on Aug. 31, 1945. Twelfth Air Force was reactivated at March Field, Calif., on May 17, 1946, and assigned as a training command under the Tactical Air Command. Following several assignments and inactivations in the late 1940s, Twelfth Air Force reactivated on Jan. 21, 1951 at Wiesbaden, Germany, assigned to United States Air Forces in Europe. Twelfth Air Force became the first USAFE unit to be committed to NATO. Along with French and Canadian air units, Twelfth Air Force was part of the 4th Allied Tactical Air Forces charged with conducting the aerial mission of NATO's Allied Air Forces Central Europe.

On Jan. 1, 1958, Twelfth Air Force relocated to Waco, Texas, and was assigned to the Tactical Air Command. During 10 years at Waco its mission began to focus on training tactical air crews to a state of combat readiness capable of conducting joint air operations. In Sept. 1968, Twelfth Air Force moved to Bergstrom AFB in Austin, Texas. During the war in Vietnam, the Twelfth was a primary source for tactical fighter, reconnaissance, and airlift forces in that theater.

In 1987, the Twelfth Air Force commander took on the added responsibility of commander, United States Air Forces in Southern Command. As such, he manages all Air Force personnel and assets in the United States Southern Command area of

responsibility—Central and South America. During Operation JUST CAUSE, for example, Twelfth Air Force and other Air Force units deployed in support of U.S. forces, returning democracy to Panama in 1989. Later, Twelfth Air Force managed and orchestrated the air operation of Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, the mission to restore democracy to Haiti in 1994. Not limited to Central and South American operations. However, during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM Twelfth Air Force provided fighter and reconnaissance aircraft and support to U.S. Central Command Air Forces.

On Jul. 13, 1993, Headquarters Twelfth Air Force officially moved from Bergstrom AFB to Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona. In September 1994, Twelfth Air Force served as the air component for Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, a United Nations sanctioned move to help restore the democratically elected government of President Jean Bertrand Aristide in Haiti. At the same time, Twelfth Air Force supported the US Southern Command's Operation SAFE HAVEN for Cuban refugees.

In the past three years Twelfth Air Force personnel and units have participated in operations in many parts of the world: SOUTHERN WATCH, PROVIDE COMFORT, DENY FLIGHT, PROVIDE PROMISE, RESTORE HOPE, and JOINT ENDEAVOR. Today Twelfth Air Force directs the activities of seven combat wings, five Direct Reporting Units and in the Midwestern and Western United States, as well as 12th AF gained units of the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard. With a history stretching over 50 years, Twelfth Air Force stands ready, today and always.

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Current as of: June 2, 2003  
Reviewed Quarterly